

FORT GANSEVOORT



Hock E Aye Vi Edgar Heap of Birds *Standing Rock Awakens the World*

Opening On:

Saturday, January 11, 5 – 7 PM

January 11 – February 22, 2020

Fort Gansevoort is pleased to present Hock E Aye Vi Edgar Heap of Birds, *Standing Rock Awakens the World* opening Saturday, January 11th, 2020. Heap of Birds' inaugural exhibition with the gallery asserts Native American sovereignty, underscoring the relationship between the body, land, and ownership.

Location is an intrinsic component to Heap of Birds' work. Upon entering the exhibition, one is confronted with the history of the land upon which one stands. Indigenous people are comprised of about one thousand nations but are often viewed as a singular race. Heap of Birds, whose roots are tied to the Cheyenne and Arapaho nations of Oklahoma, emphasizes the importance of acknowledgment and respect. Through the permanence of metal signage in his Native Host Signs, Heap of Birds solidifies and honors the presence of the many tribes in New York, while emphasizing their painful erasure in history.

Heap of Birds' pastel drawings further this political response. The gesture itself is intense and direct, as is the text itself. The words, typically grouped into threes, command attention with their vivid colors and deliberate pairings. In *Boost West*, a 15-drawing installation, the words "GOOD BYE EFFECT" are flush with "YELLOW BLUE GREEN", accentuating the hypocrisy of obliterating nations whose ideologies surrounds the preservation of the earth, which no human can survive without. In these drawing installations, the words do not compete with one another, but rather allow for a reverberation of meaning.

Heap of Birds challenges the concept of linear time. In his work, he navigates through events of the past, emphasizing their pertinence in the present and foretelling their future effects. Though his paintings are not outwardly political, they honor the earth and thus remind viewers of the destruction humans cause the planet. These works, depicted in his *Blue Neuf* series at the gallery, are far more lyrical in nature, having evolved while Heap of Birds lived above a Canyon in Oklahoma. Transcending time, the shapes themselves resemble rock formations, as well as fish and Juniper trees that he presently surrounds himself with but have also been part of the earth for millennia. The paintings are made four at a time, a practice which relates to Cheyenne cosmology and the directions north, east, south and west, further grounding the works into the earth itself. In these pieces, Heap of Birds discusses his personal connection to land while allowing viewers to question their own relationship with the earth.

The monoprint and ghost print installation, *Standing Rock Awakens the World*, debuting at the gallery, reiterates the presence of Indigenous people in this hemisphere, while further stressing the dangers of environmental destruction. A response to the 2016 Dakota Access Pipeline protests, this piece celebrates the unity of Native tribes who have come together in protest to honor the earth and water, while fighting back against the powers who threaten to destroy natural resources. Statements such as "WATER IS OUR FIRST MEDICINE" and "ARMED TROOPS SECURITY POLICE ATTACK DOGS" filter the complexity of protest into a few deliberate words, highlighting water as a vital life source while emphasizing police violence towards Indigenous people. Through his remarks on civil rights, violence, and the relationship between indigeneity and the earth, Hock E Aye Vi Edgar Heap of Birds expands the conversation into a larger question of humanity, challenging the notion of sovereignty itself.

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Hock E Aye Vi Edgar Heap of Birds was born in 1954 in Wichita, Kansas. He earned his BFA at the University of Kansas, Lawrence in 1976, undertook graduate studies at the Royal College of Art, London in 1977, and earned his MFA at the Tyler School of Art, Philadelphia in 1979. He was named USA Ford Fellow in 2012 and Distinguished Alumni, University of Kansas, in 2014. Honorary Doctor of Fine Arts and Letters degrees have been awarded by the Massachusetts College of Art and Design, Boston (2008), Emily Carr University of Art and Design, Vancouver, Canada (2017), and California Institute of the Arts, Valencia, (2018). He has exhibited his works at The Museum of Modern Art, The Whitney Museum of American Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Cheyenne and Arapaho Nations Reservation, Oklahoma; The National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, Australia; Documenta, Kassel, Germany; Orchard Gallery, Derry, Northern Ireland; University Art Museum, Berkeley, California; Association for Visual Arts Museum, Cape Town, South Africa; SITE Santa Fe, New Mexico; Hong Kong Art Center, China; Bandung Institute of Technology, Indonesia; Grand Palais, Paris, France; Nanyang Technological University Art Gallery, Singapore; and the Venice Biennale, Italy. His work is in the permanent collections of museums such as The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY; The British Museum, London, England; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; Denver Art Museum, Denver, CO; Pomona College Museum of Art, Claremont, CA; Hood Museum, Dartmouth, Hanover, NH; Institute of American Indian Arts Museum, Santa Fe, NM; Saint Louis Art Museum, Saint Louis, MO; Anchorage Museum, Anchorage, AK; University Art Museum, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ; Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, CO; Neuberger Art Museum, SUNY Purchase, Harrison, NY; Southern Plains Indian Museum, Anadarko, OK; National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian, Washington, D.C.; Schingoethe Museum, Aurora University, Aurora, Illinois; RISD Art Museum, Providence, RI; and the Museum of Contemporary Native American Art, Santa Fe, NM.

Above image: Hock E Aye Vi Edgar Heap of Birds, *Home Stands Alone*, 1990, pastel drawing on paper, 22 x 30 inches.